

Sitting, Waiting, Wishing by kirenk96

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Summary: Very angsty Mike-orientated one-shot, with undertones of friendship and Dad Steve. Set during the finale, an anxious Mike can't stop thinking about El leaving to close the gate and is wondering why on earth he let her leave. Season 2 spoilers ahead!

Sitting, Waiting, Wishing

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This is my first ever fic and my first piece of creative writing, so I'm a tad nervous to post this, but here we go! I also apologise for any grammatical errors. Season 2 spoilers ahead. Inspired by Jack Johnson's song "Sitting, Waiting, Wishing". I hope you enjoy reading it!

"Mike man, quit moving around, you're making me dizzy!" shouted an exasperated Lucas from across the room.

"Yeah c'mon buddy, sit down, I found some good nilla wafers in the kitchen." Dustin chimed in, hoping to distract his friend's obvious racing mind.

Mike continued pacing around the Byers' living room, obliviously ignoring his friends' remarks. He couldn't stop dwelling on his own stupidity – why, oh why did he let El leave through that door. For 353 days he'd been hoping, wishing, praying for her safe return. He was so certain she was alive, that she'd come back to him and make his life complete again. After already feeling the rush of a thousand heartbreaks, he just let her leave in a matter of minutes to fight those... things, monsters... 'demo-dogs' as Dustin liked to call them.

Mike nearly puked as his mind drifted back to the sheer horror they'd witnessed at Hawkins lab, during its complete overthrow by the demons from the Upside Down. Utterly utterly stupid, Wheeler. He should've fought for her, argued to keep her here, keep her safe so he could watch over and protect her as he should've done that fateful day last year. He should have refused to let her even set foot in Hopper's truck. But he didn't.

Mike continued ignoring his friends, though he could feel their eyes on him as he resumed pacing up and down the Byers' dark living room. His hands ran anxiously through his hair, tugging hard on his curly mane as dark thoughts consumed him. It was always him on the receiving end of this grief, constantly waiting for his love to return.

Love.

He loved her.

The sheer magnitude of this epiphany hit Mike so hard he stopped suddenly, crashing into the solid oak coffee table at the side of the room. He was so caught up in his own realisation, he completely missed his knee's collision with Mrs. Byers' expensive, ornate lamp, seeming unaware as it began its descent to the ground. Luckily, Max swiftly grabbed the lamp before it shattered, her wide eyes staring at Mike worriedly before darting back to Lucas' gaze.

"Er, Mike..." she started, walking up to the tall boy tentatively, as if he were a timid animal that would flee at any moment if she got too close.

"Mike? Mike, you need to calm down." Max stated matter-of-factly. She carefully placed a hand on Mike's tense shoulder, trying so hard to be supportive during his anguish. Maybe he would accept her into the group if she started being a sympathetic friend to him.

"She's going to be okay. You know how strong she is, we all do – "

Max was cut short as Mike abruptly stepped away from her, his dark, penetrating gaze making her freeze in terror.

"YOU don't know anything, you don't even know her, *Max!*" he spat her name like it was poison, making her flinch.

"So don't you DARE start acting like you do!" Mike roared, making Max shrink instinctively away from the loud shouts, as she had done so many times before, retreating towards the other boys. Lucas immediately stepped between Max and Mike, shielding Max from the tall boy's shrieking.

"Hey! Calm down, you can't talk to her like that!" Lucas yelled, throwing his hands up in the air as if signalling some sort of surrender despite his angry demeanour.

"Just stop, Lucas, you know better than anyone she knows nothing about El! She never will, nobody will!" Mike screamed, a red tinge crept up his neck to his face and ears. He felt his lower lip tremble

whilst his eyes began to water, he couldn't hold it in any longer.

Mike swayed and his legs failed him as he dropped to the ground; sobs began to wreck his body. Dustin and Lucas ran to their friend, kneeling to cradle the broken boy as his sobs grew louder and more desperate. Max watched, tears leaking from her own eyes as she observed this moment of raw, uncensored pain and agony unfolding before her. She finally understood why Mike didn't want her joining the party and the significance of this girl, Eleven.

Mike allowed the array of emotions to consume him, his devastating love for El seemed to become buried beneath the sheer desperation and anguish of wanting her back with him, away from any danger. Mike would never be able to forgive himself for this. The amount of hell, grief and abuse that El had endured, throughout her whole life, should have been reason enough for him to stop her from leaving his sight.

It should've been him walking out of that door, he should've tried harder to protect her from the evil in this world. Mike hated how weak and... insignificant he felt. Why couldn't he be strong and powerful and graceful like her? She'd never understand how he truly felt about her and what if she never got the chance to?

Mike was dimly aware of Dustin's arm around his shoulders, amidst his terrible thoughts, he welcomed his friend's support and accepted the tissue Lucas was dangling in front of him to clean his mess of a face. Mike looked up to see Max staring down at them, her eyes full of terror and pity as she fiddled with the hem of her jumper.

"I'm sorry, Max," he mumbled, "I didn't mean to shout at you, I just want El to come home safely." He sniffed meekly, avoiding eye contact. Lucas gave his shoulder a friendly squeeze as a thank you. Max took a few steps towards the boys. "It's okay, Mike, don't worry about it. I know how important she is to you." She gave him a small smile, feeling grateful for his sincerity.

"Hey, what's with all the screaming, sounds like someone woke up the Demogorgon in the fridge!" Steve hurried in from the back garden, holding a bloody rag and his wooden bat. He stopped as his eyes settled on the three boys huddled together on the living room

floor, Mike still crying. Steve rushed towards the group.

"Woah, what happened?! Mike, buddy, what's wrong? Are you hurt? What's going on?!" he knelt in front of Mike, placing both hands on his shoulders, looking from him to Dustin to Lucas. Steve's concern and warmth set off a wave of hot, fresh tears to commence falling from Mike's distressed eyes, rendering him speechless. Dustin looked down at Mike, patted his shoulder, and decided it was best to answer on his behalf.

"He's just worried about El. But we've been reassuring him that she's gonna be just fine." He gave Steve a knowing look and Steve nodded, gently shaking Mike's heaving shoulders.

"Hey, buddy, listen – "

Steve stopped as the room was suddenly illuminated with a bright, white light. Before Dustin even had a chance to exclaim that Hopper was back, Mike broke free from the embrace of his friends and was sprinting towards the door, stopping in front of Hopper's roaring truck.

The truck's front lights burned harshly into Mike's swollen eyes, but he ignored the pain as he searched the inside of Hopper's truck with his sore eyes, trying to find the smallest sign she was there. He watched as a dishevelled Hopper lazily slid out of the vehicle, completely ignoring him - he felt more insignificant than ever.

Mike was suddenly rooted to the spot, frozen, thousands of words burning in his chest, begging to be screamed and shouted out, but he was stunned into silence, the words unable to leave his dry mouth.

The passenger seat was empty.

Mike felt his stomach drop as his knees buckled and his legs threatened to fail him for the second time in the past hour. She wasn't in there. No. It couldn't be. Mike couldn't comprehend that, he just couldn't. He was shell-shocked, unable to move, breathe, think. That's when he saw Hopper open the passenger door.

The older man struggled, grunting loudly as he pulled something out

of the car. Mike barely registered the dirty white converse trainers and rolled up jeans. His breath hitched as he saw a floppy hand, then an arm, a black coat and then...

Hopper pulled an unmoving El out of the vehicle.

Her face came into view. Her perfect, magnificent face. She was here. But her black, make-up stained eyes were dimly closed, her body limp and lifeless. The emotions consuming him were overwhelmingly distinct. El was here, right here in front of him. But she wasn't moving or talking. Feeling a jolt of adrenaline coursing through his veins, Mike's muscles sprang into action and finally, the words tumbled out of him all at once.

"El? El?! El, please! Hopper is she – why isn't she moving? Hopper?! Why isn't she moving? EL?! EL?!" his anguished shrieks echoed through the darkness, into the house.

Mike desperately ran up to the pair, but Hopper continued to ignore him as he carried El's drooping body into the house. Mike ran behind them unable to make sense of the scene unfolding before him. Steve looked taken aback as he watched an unkempt Hopper step into the house, holding a lifeless bundle, with Mike following anxiously behind. Steve quickly made space on the sofa, helping Hopper to lay El down carefully.

"Hop, what happened? Is she okay?" asked Steve as he nervously eyed El's frail form.

"She did it. She really did it." Hopper muttered quietly, reaching into his back pocket as he grabbed a cigarette.

The rest of the group surrounded the small, feeble girl on the sofa, as Mike knelt next to her, holding her unresponsive hand in his own. She was so cold.

"El please, El! It's me, it's Mike, I'm here El, please wake up! El please, *please!*" thick tears rolled down Mike's red cheeks as he begged El to wake up.

"Hopper what's wrong with her?!" Hopper just stared at the girl,

ignoring Mike's pleading eyes. Suddenly a small, barely inaudible sound made Mike whip his eyes back to the sofa.

"Mike." breathed El. Mike felt as if his heart had been jolted back into action, butterflies erupted in his stomach as he finally seemed to regain control over his breathing. His whole body felt ten pounds lighter.

"El? El you're safe, I'm here, it's okay." He spoke softly, gently, afraid she would disappear if his voice was too loud. He interlaced his fingers with hers, feeling pure love coursing through him as his damp, weary eyes locked with her brown, beautiful ones.

"I promise I won't ever let anything hurt you again. You're home now." El's other hand moved to gently brush the tears dripping from Mike's eyes. She let her hand linger there, stroking his face, drinking it in.

"Home." El whispered, as she closed her heavy lids and drifted into the sweet embrace of sleep, feeling content that she was safe with Mike, with her family.